

NOEL STREATFEILD

The Circus is Coming

ILLUSTRATED BY
CLARKE HUTTON



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CHAPTER I

AUNT REBECCA

PETER and Santa were orphans. When they were babies their father and mother were killed in a railway accident, so they came and lived with their aunt. The aunt's name was Rebecca Possit, but of course they called her Aunt Rebecca. The aunt had been lady's maid to a duchess. This was a good thing, because when the duchess died she left her an annuity, and, as Aunt Rebecca had no other money and neither had the children, it was important. In other ways it was not so good. Being lady's maid to a duchess had made Aunt Rebecca suppose that only dukes and duchesses, and perhaps kings and queens, could be right. She never did or said anything without first thinking how 'Her Grace' would have said or done it. As the duchess's sayings and doings had been rather a bore, Aunt Rebecca's were too.

What Aunt Rebecca said and did would not have mattered much to Peter and Santa because, of course, they were interested in their own things, but most unluckily the duchess had a great many grandchildren who had often been to stay at Plyst (pronounced 'Pleat'), where the duchess had spent most of her time. How Peter and Santa suffered from the duchess's grandchildren!

'I don't believe anything nice ever happened to that awful Lady Marigold or Lady Moira or those horrible Manliston children,' Santa grumbled.

Peter said:

'It's all very well for you to make a fuss, but you don't have that dreadful Lord Bronedin pushed down your throat all day.'

Santa had fair hair which hung right down to her waist. It